

House File 696 - Introduced

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BY ABDUL-SAMAD, EHLERT,
DONAHUE, and McCONKEY

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to the establishment of a study committee on
2 child marriage.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. MULTIDEPARTMENTAL STUDY COMMITTEE ON CHILD
2 MARRIAGE.

3 1. The department of human services, the department
4 of public safety, and the department of justice shall
5 cooperatively establish a study committee on child marriage.

6 2. The study committee shall do all of the following:

7 a. Review the prevalence of child marriage in the state, in
8 the United States, and globally to determine trends, causes,
9 and the impacts of child marriage.

10 b. Review the specific social and economic underpinnings of
11 child marriage including but not limited to gender inequality,
12 cultural tradition, poverty, and economic or social insecurity,
13 and the impacts of child marriage including but not limited
14 to educational attainment; financial stability and earnings;
15 physical, reproductive, and mental health including maternal
16 morbidity and mortality; violence, coercion including
17 reproductive coercion, and physical, sexual, emotional, and
18 other forms of abuse; the likelihood of divorce; and the
19 broader impacts of intergenerational and societal costs and
20 consequences.

21 c. Review existing laws and policies that reinforce child
22 marriage as a legally viable alternative to criminal liability,
23 including those relating to human trafficking, coercion,
24 exploitation, and statutory rape.

25 d. Determine if data relating to child marriage in the state
26 is sufficient to provide a clear basis for addressing child
27 marriage, and if not, what additional data is needed.

28 e. Make recommendations regarding but not limited to
29 whether child marriage should be eliminated in the state
30 without exception; and the strategies that should be employed
31 to delay or prevent child marriage including but not limited
32 to empowering girls with information, skills, and support
33 networks; providing economic support and incentives to girls
34 and their families; educating parents and family members;
35 enhancing girls' access to high-quality education; and

1 encouraging supportive laws and policies to end child marriage
2 and meet the needs of married children.

3 3. The study committee shall involve input from a
4 multidisciplinary group of individuals who possess knowledge
5 and expertise related to child marriage, child development,
6 child protection, maternal health, domestic violence, mental
7 health, social work, education, law, juvenile justice, human
8 trafficking, law enforcement, and other appropriate stakeholder
9 interests.

10 4. For the purposes of this section, "child marriage"
11 means any marriage in which at least one of the parties is
12 under eighteen years of age, and includes a forced or coerced
13 marriage in which one or both parties have not expressed, or do
14 not have the capacity to express, their full and free consent
15 to the marriage.

16 5. The task force shall submit a report of its findings and
17 recommendations to the governor and the general assembly by
18 December 1, 2021.

19 EXPLANATION

20 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
21 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

22 This bill requires the department of human services, the
23 department of public safety, and the department of justice to
24 cooperatively establish a study committee on child marriage.
25 The bill specifies the duties of the task force including
26 reviewing the prevalence of child marriage in the state, in
27 the United States, and globally to determine trends, causes,
28 and the impacts of child marriage including impacts on the
29 parties and more broadly on society; reviewing existing laws
30 and policies that reinforce child marriage as a legally viable
31 alternative to criminal liability; determining if sufficient
32 data on child marriage in the state exists to provide a clear
33 basis for addressing child marriage; and making recommendations
34 regarding but not limited to whether child marriage should be
35 eliminated in the state without exception, and the strategies

1 that should be employed to delay or prevent child marriage.

2 The study committee shall involve input from a
3 multidisciplinary group of individuals who possess knowledge
4 and expertise in various areas. The bill provides a definition
5 of "child marriage" for the purposes of the bill and requires
6 the task force to submit a report of its findings and
7 recommendations to the governor and the general assembly by
8 December 1, 2021.